

1 **Neural and non-neural contributions to sexual dimorphism of mid-day**
2 **sleep in *Drosophila*: A pilot study**

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Keywords: sleep, sexual dimorphism, *Drosophila*, *transformer*, fat body, *takeout*

23 **Abstract**

24
25 Many of the characteristics associated with mammalian sleep are also observed in *Drosophila*,
26 making the fruit-fly a powerful model organism for studying the genetics of this important process.
27 Among these similarities is the presence of sexual dimorphic sleep patterns, which in flies, is
28 manifested as increased mid-day sleep ('siesta') in males, compared to females. Here, we have used
29 targeted miss-expression of the gene *transformer* (*tra*) and *tra2* to either feminise or masculinise
30 specific neural and non-neural tissues in the fly. Feminization of males using three different GAL4
31 drivers which are expressed in the mushroom bodies induced a female-like reduced siesta, while the
32 masculinisation of females using these drivers triggered the male-like increased siesta. We also
33 observed a similar reversal of sex-specific sleep by miss-expressing *tra* in the fat body, a key tissue
34 in energy metabolism and hormone secretion. In addition, the daily expression levels of *takeout*, an
35 important circadian clock output gene, were sexually dimorphic. Taken together, our experiments
36 suggest that sleep-sexual dimorphism in *Drosophila* is driven by multiple neural and non-neural
37 circuits, within and outside the brain.

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42 **Keywords:** *Drosophila*, Sleep, sexual dimorphism. *takeout*, fat body, mushroom body, *transformer*

43 **Introduction**

44 Studies in various organisms have shown that various sleep properties are gender specific. In humans
45 for example, the frequency of sleep spindles (a burst of oscillatory neural activity during stage N2
46 sleep) is elevated in women compared with men (Gaillard & Blois, 1981). In addition, women sleep
47 longer, when deprived from external cues under lab conditions (Wever, 1984), and slow wave sleep
48 (SWS) is more frequent in women than in men (Reynolds *et al.*, 1990). Sex difference in sleep
49 patterns is also present in mice (Sinton *et al.*, 1981; Paul *et al.*, 2006) and rats (Fang & Fishbein
50 1996).

51 Similar to mammals, the pattern of sleep in *Drosophila* is also sexually dimorphic, with a
52 pronounced mid-day sleep ('siesta') in males, but not in females (Andretic & Shaw, 2005; Ho &
53 Sehgal, 2005). In addition, the fly response to sleep deprivation has also been studied (Hendricks *et*
54 *al.*, 2003; Shaw *et al.*, 2002), although gender dimorphic differences have been observed only in the
55 circadian clock mutant cycle (aka *Bmall*). Female mutants have a pronounced rest rebound, whereas
56 in males the homeostatic response is reduced or non-existing.

57 A recent study (Catterson *et al.*, 2010) has shown that diet has a major impact on sleep patterns, in a
58 way which was also sex-dependant. Males fed with dietary yeast extracts showed increased
59 locomotor activity and shorten diurnal and nocturnal sleep, while females responded to this diet with
60 reduced daytime locomotor activity and a more fragmented nocturnal sleep. The reduced mid-day
61 sleep in females has been associated mainly with inseminated females (Isaac *et al.*, 2010), which has
62 led to the suggestion that the sex-peptide, a male seminal peptide transferred during copulation,
63 modulates the female behaviour and promotes their mid-day waking.

64 Sex determination in *Drosophila* has been extensively studied (Schutt & Nothiger, 2000) and genetic
65 tools are available, allowing manipulation of specific target tissues. The *transformer* (*tra*) gene is a

66 key gene in the cascade responsible for somatic sexual differentiation. In females, splicing of *tra*
67 (mediated by SXL) generates TRA protein that activates the female sexual differentiation. In males,
68 the *tra* pre-mRNA is spliced into its male-specific form, which translates into a truncated inactive
69 protein, consequently leading to male sexual differentiation. Ectopic expression of the female form of
70 *tra* RNA causes chromosomal males to develop as females (McKeown *et al.*, 1988). The UAS-GAL4
71 binary system in *Drosophila* (Brand & Perrimon, 1993) allows the expression of the female spliced
72 form of *tra* in targeted cells in a male, inducing a female pattern of development; strains with a
73 GAL4 transgene expressed in a defined set of cells are crossed to those carrying the female-specific
74 *tra^F* fused to upstream activating sequence (UAS-*tra*). This leads to activation of *tra* in all the tissues
75 expressing GAL4, creating tissue-specific feminization (Ferveur *et al.*, 1995; Ferveur *et al.*, 1997). A
76 similar approach has also been used to masculinise female specific tissues, using a *tra2* RNA
77 interfering construct (UAS-*tra2*-IR) (Lazareva *et al.*, 2007). Here, we have used the UAS-GAL4
78 system to feminize male specific regions of the brain and masculinise female specific neurons, trying
79 to identify the sleep circuits that may be controlling this sexually dimorphic behaviour in flies.

80 **Materials and Methods**

81 *Fly strains*

82 To feminise males, the strain *w*; UAS-*tra*^F from the Bloomington Drosophila Stock Centre at Indiana
83 University (stock number 4590) was used. For female masculinisation, we used a transgenic strain
84 carrying dsRNAi construct targeting *tra2*, (UAS-*tra2*-IR), which was obtained from Vienna
85 Drosophila RNAi Centre (stock v8868). Another strain targeting UAS-*tra* also has been used (stock
86 v2560), but preliminary tests indicated that mid-day sleep females UAS-*tra*-IR is unusually high, and
87 therefore not useful for testing female masculinisation. UAS-*dicer2* transgenic strain (stock v60008)
88 was used to enhance the efficiency of RNAi in some crosses (specified when used).

89 Four GAL4 enhancer-trap strains, 103Y, 30Y, 121Y (Gatti *et al.*, 2000) and Voila-GAL4 (Balakireva
90 *et al.*, 1998) driving expression in the mushroom bodies (MB), central complex and a small cluster in
91 pars intercerebralis (PI) were a gift from Jean-François Ferveur at the University of Dijon .

92 Additional GAL4 strains were obtained from Bloomington Stock Centre included the pan neural
93 *w*; *elav*-GAL4 (stock 8760), and *w*;1471-GAL4 strain with expression patterns in the γ lobes of MB
94 (stock 9465). *takeout(to)*-GAL4 driving expression in the fat body as well as in a subset of cells
95 within the maxillary palps and antennae (Dauwalder *et al.*, 2002) was a gift from Brigitte Dauwalder
96 at the University of Houston.

97 Each of the strains above was also crossed to *w*¹¹¹⁸ and their F1 progeny were used as two controls
98 (UAS and GAL4) compared to the phenotype of flies carrying the both transgenes. All stocks and
99 experimental crosses were maintained at 25°C with a Light:Dark (LD) 12:12 h, and kept on standard
100 cornmeal/sugar-based food.

101 *Sleep assay*

102 The sleep/wake pattern of flies aged 3-4 days was monitored using the Drosophila Activity
103 Monitoring System (DAMS, TriKinetics) at 25°C in LD 12:12 h, for a total of 4 days. Only virgin
104 females were used in all experiments. Data was collected in five- min bins, and sleep was quantified
105 by summing consecutive bins for which no activity was recorded, using the R software (R
106 Development Core Team, 2010). Since the mid-day 'Siesta' sleep time interval varied among strains
107 (typically, between 5-8 h after light on), we quantified the daily average sleep during 2 h around noon
108 (5-7 h after lights on). This has simplified the algorithm and ensured the capture of mid-day sleep. In
109 the feminizing experiments, where the female-spliced form of *tra* was expressed in males, siesta
110 sleep was calculated both in the feminized males and in females, and compared to their background
111 controls. Similarly, in masculinisation of the females, RNAi constructs of *tra* and *tra2* were
112 expressed in females, and siesta sleep was assessed in males and masculinised females, and
113 compared to their background controls. In each experiment, the sleep scores of the three genotypes
114 were compared by Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA. Tests indicating significant difference were followed by
115 the Siegel-Castellan non-parametric post-hoc test (Siegel & Castellen, 1988,pp.213-214), comparing
116 each of the control to the GAL4/UAS genotype. Statistical tests were carried with the *pgirmess*
117 library implemented in the statistical software “R” (R Development Core Team, 2010).

118 *RNA Quantification*

119 The mRNA levels of *to* were assayed by qPCR. We analysed males, virgin females and mated
120 females, 4-5 days old. Flies were maintained at 25°C in a 12-h LD cycle for 5 days. On the sixth day
121 the files were collected at two different time points, immediately after lights on (Zt0), and 6 h after
122 lights off (Zt6). Total RNA was isolated from male fly heads using TRIZOL (Invitrogen). Five
123 hundred ng of total RNA was used for cDNA synthesis, which was carried with the Affinity Script

124 kit (Stratagene). Oligo(dT) primers were used for the first strand synthesis. qPCR was carried using a
125 SYBR Green assay (Agilent technology). The standard curve method was followed to quantify *to*
126 mRNA, in 25 μ L reactions, with 0.3 μ M of final primer concentration. The forward primer was, 5'-
127 GCCTTTTGGTCTCGGTGGAT-3'; reverse primer, 5'-TCCCCATTCTTCACCAGCG (amplicon size
128 142bp). *Ribosomal protein 49* mRNA (*rp49*) was used as the reference gene. The forward primer
129 was, 5'-TTACAAGGAGACGGCCAAAG; the reverse primer, 5'-CTCTGCCCACTTGAAGAGC .

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131 **Results**

132 All the transgenic strains used in this study exhibited a marked sexual dimorphic in mid-day sleep
133 (Figs. S1-S5 in Supplementary Material), with males sleeping up to twice as much as females (males
134 [mean \pm SD]: 94 \pm 21, females: 42 \pm 24 min during 2 h at mid-day), similar to the previously reported
135 sleep differences exhibited by wild-type Canton-S (Andreatic & Shaw, 2005; Ho & Sehgal, 2005).

136 We have tested the contribution of the mushroom bodies (MBs) to sexual dimorphic sleep using five
137 different GAL4 drivers. The 121Y-GAL4 strain drives expression in the central complex (CC) and
138 the MBs (Gatti *et al.*, 2000; Armstrong *et al.*, 1995). Using this driver for expressing UAS-*tra* (Fig.
139 1A) resulted in significantly reduced (feminised) male siesta sleep compared to control males
140 carrying only a single transgene. Using this driver for knocking down *tra2* for masculinisation of the
141 MBs induced siesta sleep in females, which was significantly higher than either of the single
142 transgene controls (Fig. 1B). Note that the similar sleep level in females in the feminisation
143 experiment (Fig. 1A) or the males in the masculinisation experiment (Fig. 1B) suggest that the
144 response that we observe is not merely due to the interaction between the GAL4 and UAS genetic
145 backgrounds.

146 The 30Y-GAL4 transgene is expressed in the MBs and the CC (Gatti *et al.*, 2000; Yang *et al.*, 1995).
147 Feminisation of males using this driver induced a small, but significant, reduction of sleep compared
148 to the UAS control ($P < 0.01$), but not compared to the GAL4 control, which showed unusual
149 reduced sleep (Fig. 2A). The effect of using this driver to masculinise females was stronger, and
150 UAS-*tra2*-IR (Fig. 2B) resulted in siesta sleep in females that was comparable to that exhibited by
151 males.

152 Using the 103Y-GAL4 line whose expression also extend to the MBs and CC (Tettamanti *et al.*,
153 1997) also induced reversal of siesta sleep; in males, sleep was reduced compared to the UAS control
154 (but not compared with the GAL4 control, which showed non-typical low siesta, Fig. 3A). In
155 females, brain masculinisation induced male-like siesta sleep (Fig. 3B). We observed a similar
156 reversal of sleep using the 1471-GAL4 which is expressed in the γ lobes of MBs (Isabel *et al.*, 2004)
157 (Fig.4). In contrast, using the *Voila*-GAL4 line, which is expressed in the MBs and the antennal lobes
158 (Balakireva *et al.*, 1998), did not result in any significant change in sleep in either feminised males or
159 masculinised females (Fig. S6 in Supplementary Material).

160 Interestingly, the *to*-GAL4 strain, which is expressed in the fat body (Dauwalder *et al.*, 2002) was
161 also effective in reversing sleep (Fig. 5). While feminisation of males caused only small reduction of
162 siesta sleep (compared with the UAS, but not with the GAL4 control), the masculinisation of females
163 using the UAS-*tra2*-IR transgene induced a substantial increase in siesta sleep in females (Fig. 5),
164 indicating a role for the fat body in sleep sexual dimorphism.

165 We have also analysed the transcript level of *to* during the beginning of the day (Zt0) and midday
166 (Zt6) (Fig. 6). The expression of *to* was sexually dimorphic with a significant time-sex interaction
167 ($F_{1,10} = 4.99$, $P < 0.05$). In both males and females, transcript level was relatively high at the
168 beginning of the day and decline at midday as was previously reported (Benito *et al.*, 2010), but was

169 substantially higher in males at Zt0 (Fig. 6). Thus, sex-dependent differences in *to* expression at the
170 beginning of the day may contribute to the differences in siesta sleep. Although RNA level
171 converged to the same level at midday in males and females, there might be a time-lag between the
172 mRNA and the protein profiles. This would lead to a different TO protein level between males and
173 female just before siesta time (although previous studies suggested that this lag is rather small, So *et*
174 *al.*, 2000; Benito *et al.*, 2010).

175 **Discussion**

176 In this study we have focused on the MBs, which have been previously implicated as a key brain
177 structure in sleep regulation (Joiner *et al.*, 2006; Pitman *et al.*, 2006). The role of the MB seems to be
178 complex: preventing the MB output (either transiently, or by ablation) results in reduced sleep (Joiner
179 *et al.*, 2006; Pitman *et al.*, 2006), but raising the activity of Go signalling in the MB enhances sleep
180 (Guo *et al.*, 2011). This complexity has been evident in a recent study showing that Go signalling is
181 present in two adjacent subtypes of MB cholinergic neurons that play opposite roles in sleep
182 regulation (Yi *et al.*, 2013). Most parts of the MB are innervated by a single pair of neurons, the
183 dorsal paired medial (DPM), which have recently shown to promote sleep (Haynes *et al.*, 2015). The
184 mechanism involves inhibition of the MB α'/β' neurons, by GABA release. The MB outputs converge
185 onto a small subset of neurons (called MB output neurons, MBONs), whose role in sleep regulation
186 has been recently studied in detail (Aso *et al.*, 2014). Glutamatergic MBONs were found to be sleep-
187 suppressing while GABAergic or cholinergic neurons were sleep-promoting.

188 Four of the driver lines that we have tested, 121Y, 30Y, 103Y and Voila have been previously
189 implicated in controlling a sexually dimorphic locomotion behaviour (Gatti *et al.*, 2000), with males
190 exhibiting significantly shorter inter-bout intervals (and lower variation) than females. The overlap of
191 the expression patterns of these GAL4 lines was restricted to a small cluster in the pars-intercerebralis

192 (PI), which was therefore suggested as a candidate for the location of that circuit. Here, however, the
193 Voila driver did not have any effect on reversing sleep, while the driver *1471-GAL4* (not expressed
194 in the PI) did (Fig. 4). Given that the overlap between these driver lines mainly consists of the MBs,
195 which have recently been implicated in the regulation of sleep (Joiner *et al.*, 2006; Pitman *et al.*,
196 2006), it is likely that neurons in this centre also underlie the variations in siesta sleep. We do note
197 however that in three of our feminisation experiments (Fig. 2A, 3A, & 4A) the experimental line did
198 not differ significantly from the GAL4 driver, complicating our interpretation. Interestingly, males
199 carrying these MB GAL4 driver showed unusual sleep, which may be the result of GAL4
200 accumulation in brain neurons as was previously reported (Rezaval *et al.*, 2007). Testing additional
201 GAL4 drivers with more specific expression in the MBs, for example by using the split-GAL4
202 collection that has been recently created (Aso *et al.*, 2014), will aid identifying the neurons
203 underlying sexual dimorphism. In addition, given that the PI has been shown to be important for
204 sleep regulation (Foltényi *et al.*, 2007; Crocker *et al.*, 2010) further analysis using PI-specific drivers
205 would help ruling out a role for this brain region in the sexual dimorphism. Future experiments
206 would also benefit from backcrossing all GAL4 and UAS strains onto a uniform genetic background,
207 which is rather important in sleep studies involving genetic screens (Axelrod *et al.*, 2015).

208 The use of GAL4 lines may be combined with the GAL80 enhancer traps, to repress the GAL4
209 expression, to drive feminization or masculinisation in a subset of cells of the drivers described here,
210 refining the candidate regions (Suster *et al.*, 2004). This approach has been very successful in
211 refining the brain neurons that constitute the circadian clock in *Drosophila* (Stoleru *et al.*, 2004).

212 Interestingly, the *to-GAL4* strain, which is expressed in the fat body (Dauwalder *et al.*, 2002) was
213 also effective in reversing sleep (Fig. 5). *to* is also sparsely expressed in the antennae, but not in sex-
214 specific manner (Dauwalder *et al.*, 2002), so this tissue is unlikely contributing to the sleep sexual
215 dimorphism. Previous studies showed that *to* is under circadian control (Benito *et al.*, 2010) and is

216 involved in the regulation of feeding as well as adaptation to starvation (Meunier *et al.*, 2007; Sarov-
217 Blat *et al.*, 2000). Thus, it is possible that the sleep sexual dimorphism is mediated by *to* (and the fat
218 body) indirectly, so feminizing or masculinising the fat body changes the feeding status of the
219 animal, and consequently its foraging behaviour. This idea fits well the recent studies that show a
220 direct link between sleep pattern and feeding (Catterson *et al.*, 2010). Interestingly, in a recent study
221 that analysed sleep behaviour in wild populations over a broad latitudinal range (Svetec *et al.*, 2015),
222 *to* was identified as a strongly differentially expressed gene, suggesting that it is the target for natural
223 selection.

224 The sexual dimorphism in sleep was also attributed to the egg-laying activity of females (Isaac *et al.*,
225 2010), which in flies is also under circadian-clock regulation (Sheeba *et al.*, 2001). Oviposition by
226 itself, cannot explain the reduced mid-day sleep, since it peaks after dusk (Sheeba *et al.*, 2001), but
227 females may need to be active during mid-day for acquiring nutrients for egg production, and these
228 gender-specific metabolic constraints may underlying the sleep sexual dimorphism. However, in the
229 current study only young virgin females have been used, so this excludes oviposition being a major
230 factor for lack of siesta in females that we have observed (in all GAL4 and UAS strains, as well as
231 Canton-S). This is also in apparent contradiction to Isaac *et al.* (2010) who reported that virgin
232 females show male-like siesta, and switch to mid-day activity following mating because of the effect
233 of the sex-peptides (SP) transferred by the males. However, the substantial higher day sleep in virgin
234 females compared to males that we observed was also reported by others (Harbison *et al.*, 2009). The
235 discrepancy between the studies may be due to the different strains used, but in general, other
236 mechanisms in addition to the SP seem to contribute to the decreased mid-day sleep of females.
237 These mechanisms may include both neural and non-neural circuits as suggested by the current work.

238

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356 **Figure legends**

357 Fig. 1. Siesta sleep following feminsation and masculinisation of mushroom bodies. Box-plots
358 showing siesta sleep in flies carrying 121Y-GAL4 driving (A) UAS-*tra* (feminsation of males), and
359 (B) UAS-*tra2* (masculinisation of females). In each panel, the three left boxes show sleep in
360 females, and the three right boxes (shaded grey) are for the males. The data shown in each panel
361 represent siesta sleep for the GAL4/UAS genotypes (G4/U, white, $n > 20$ for all GAL4 lines; males
362 and females) and the single transgene control genotypes (GAL4/+, G4, light grey; UAS/+, U dark
363 grey) for both sexes. Asterisks represent experimental genotype (GAL4/UAS) significance levels
364 compared to control genotypes (GAL4/+ and UAS/+). Non-parametric post hoc tests were performed
365 ($*P < 0.05$, $**P < 0.01$). The line within each box represents the median siesta sleep averaged over 4
366 days (in minutes), and the boxes extend to 25 and 75 percentiles. Note that significance differences
367 are only tested for males in the feminisation experiments, or females in the masculinisation
368 experiments.

369 **Fig. 2.** Feminsation and masculinisation of mushroom bodies using 30Y-GAL4. Box-plots showing
370 siesta sleep in flies carrying 30Y-GAL4 driving (A) UAS-*tra* (feminsation of males), and (B) UAS –
371 *tra2* (masculinisation of females). Plotting scheme same as in Fig. 1.

372 **Fig. 3.** Feminsation and masculinisation of mushroom bodies using 103Y-GAL4. Box-plots showing
373 siesta sleep in flies carrying 103Y-GAL4 driving (A) UAS-*tra* (feminsation of males), and (B) UAS
374 –*tra2* (masculinisation of females).Plotting scheme same as in Fig. 1.

375 **Fig. 4.** Feminsation and masculinisation of mushroom bodies using 1471-GAL4. Box-plots showing
376 siesta sleep in flies carrying 1471-GAL4 driving (A) UAS-*tra* (feminsation of males), and (B) UAS –
377 *tra2* (masculinisation of females).Plotting scheme same as in Fig. 1.

378 **Fig. 5.** Siesta sleep following feminisation and masculinisation of the fat body. The *takeout (to)* Gal4
379 driver was used for (A) feminsation of males using UAS-*tra*^F, and (B) masculinisation of females
380 using UAS-*tra2*-IR. Plot parameters are as described in Figure 1.

381 **Fig. 6.** Sexual dimorphism in *takeout* expression. The relative mRNA expression of males (filled
382 circles) and females (open circles) is depicted for Zt0 and Zt6. Expression is normalised to reference
383 gene *rp49*. The error bars represent SE.

Fig. 1.

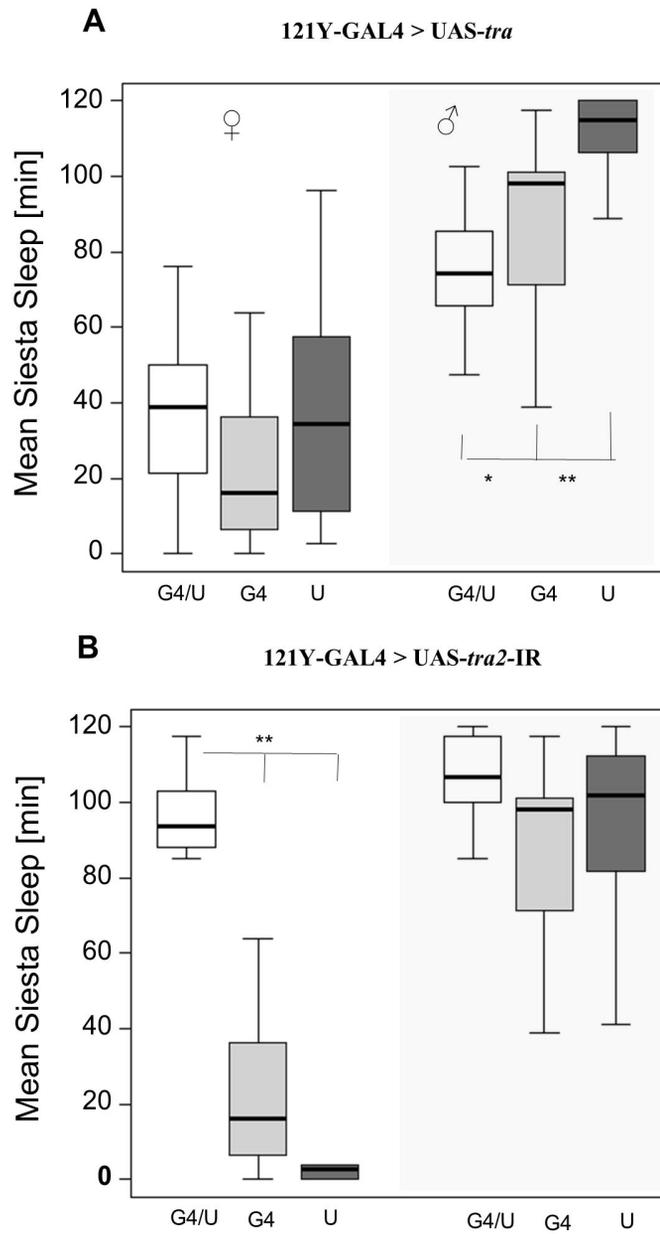


Fig. 2.

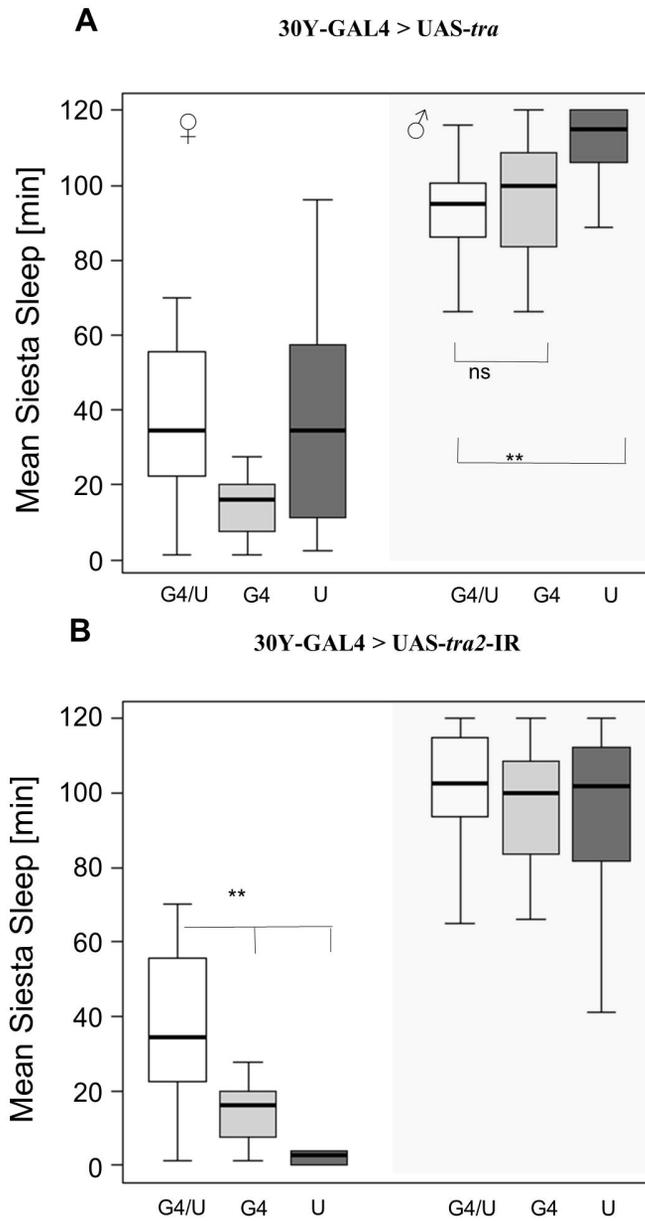


Fig. 3.

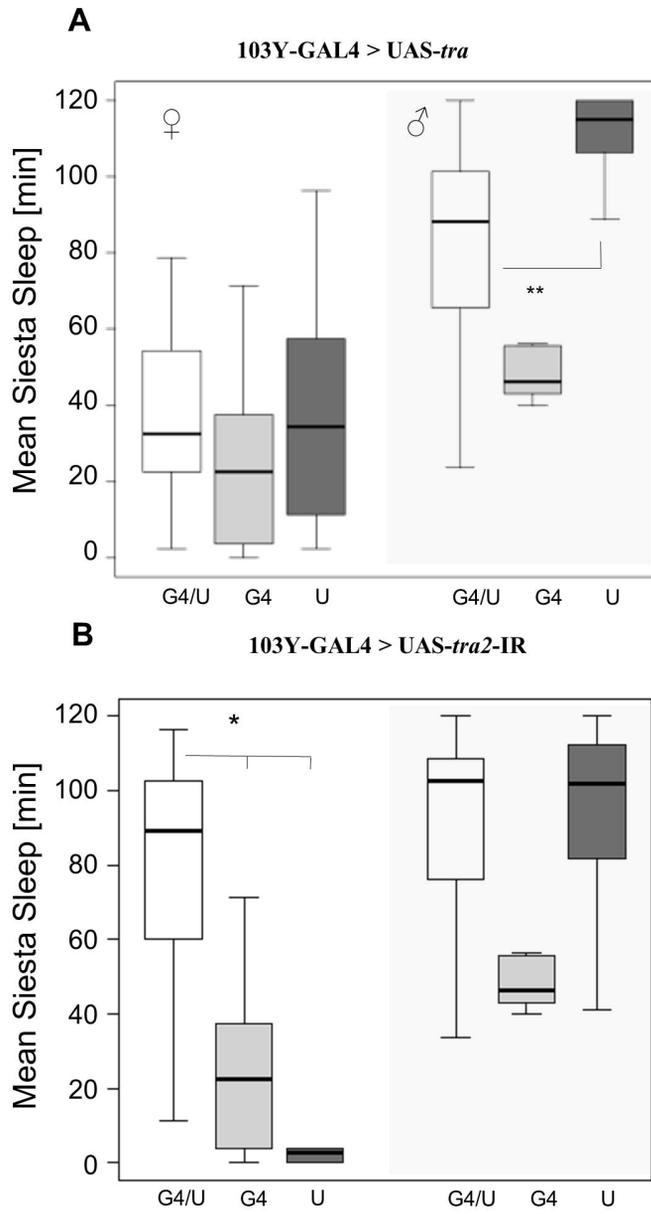


Fig. 4.

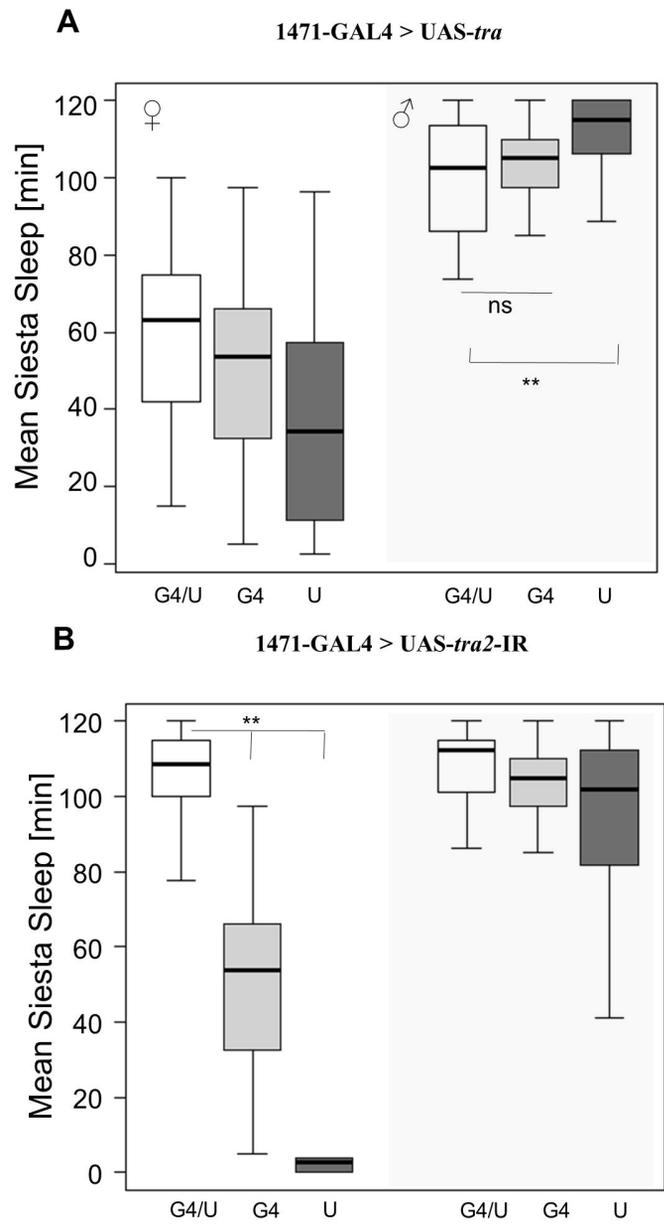


Fig. 5.

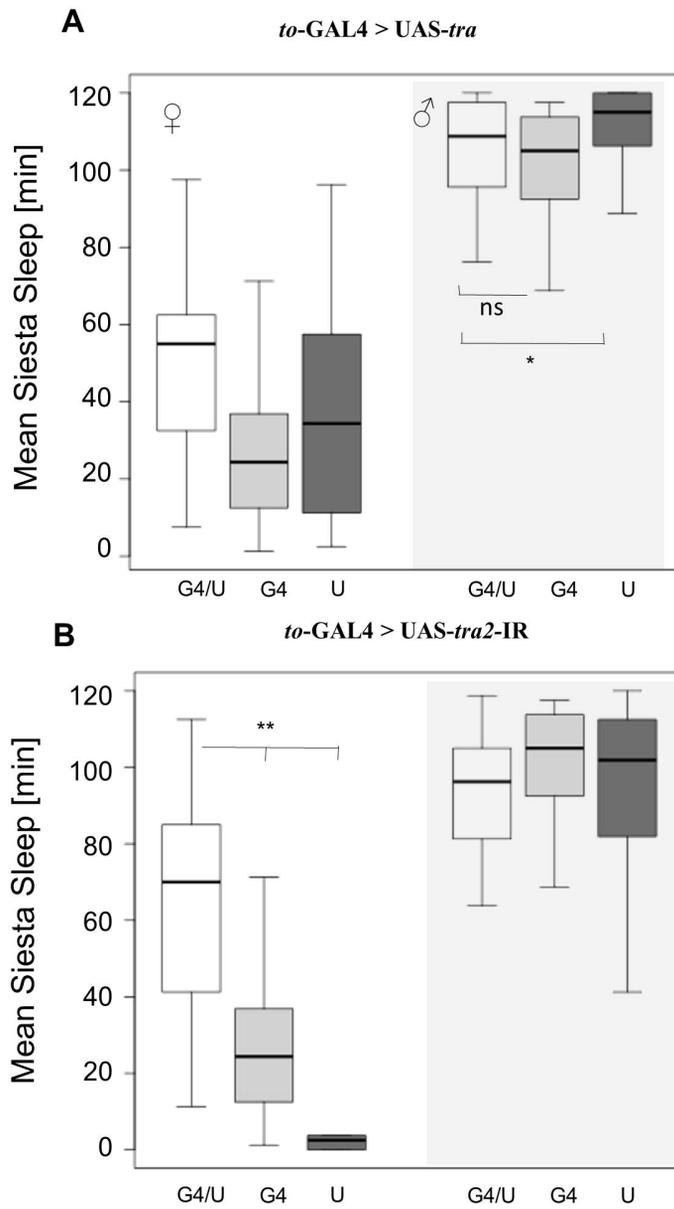


Fig. 6.

